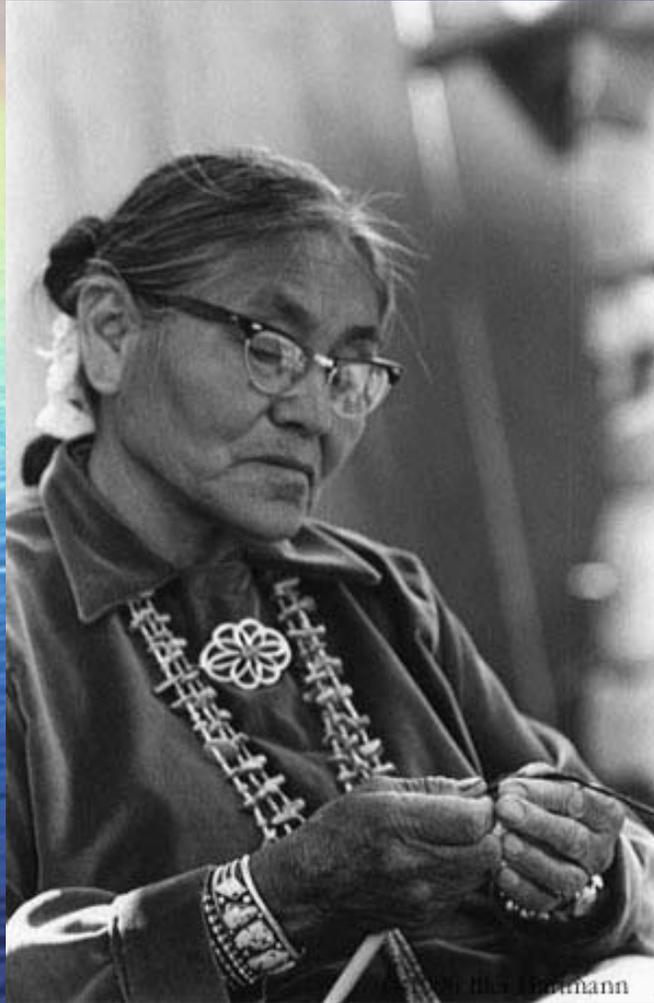


Navajo Medicine compared to Modern Medicine and Nursing Practices

By: Raycinda Yazzie

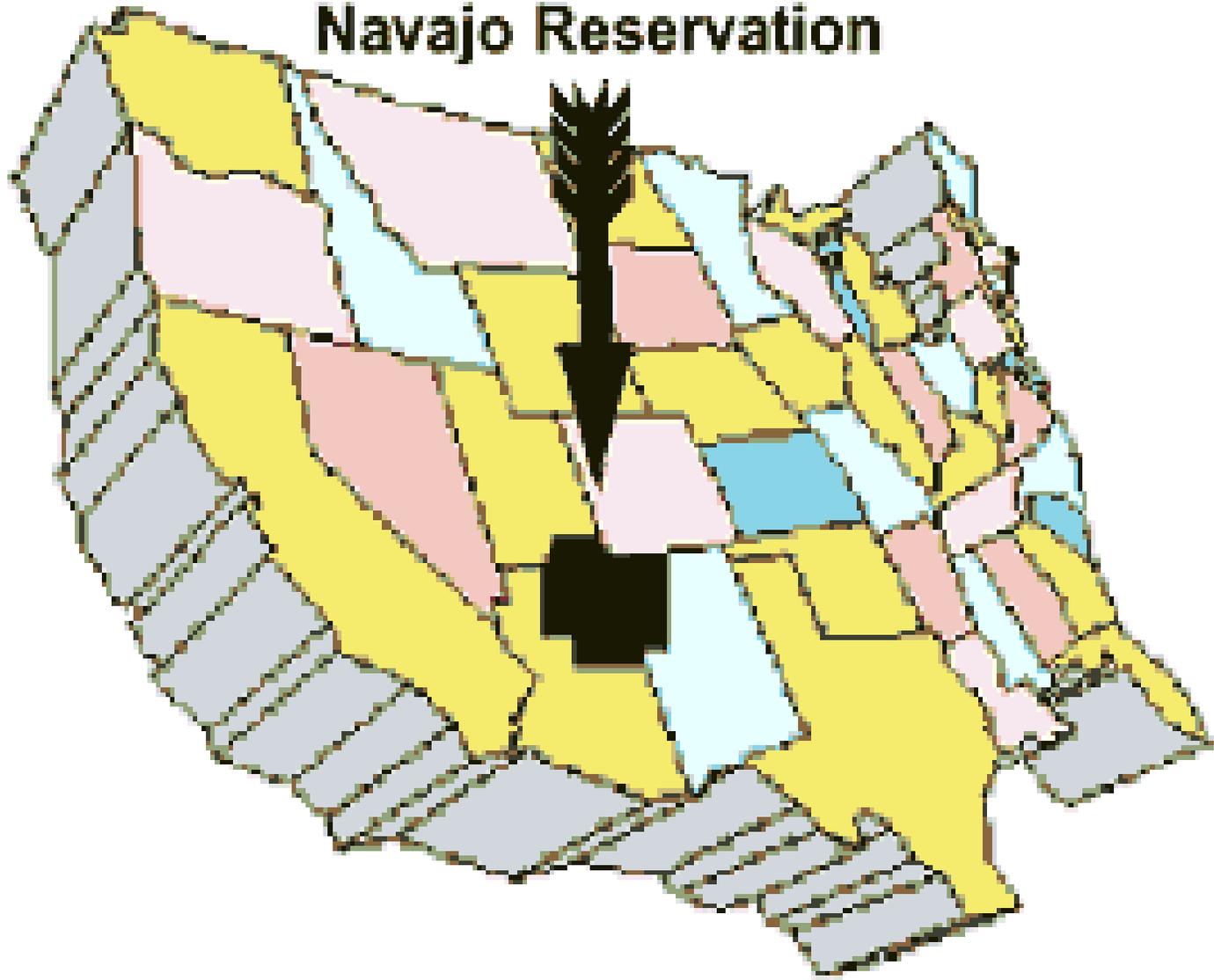
August 7, 2003

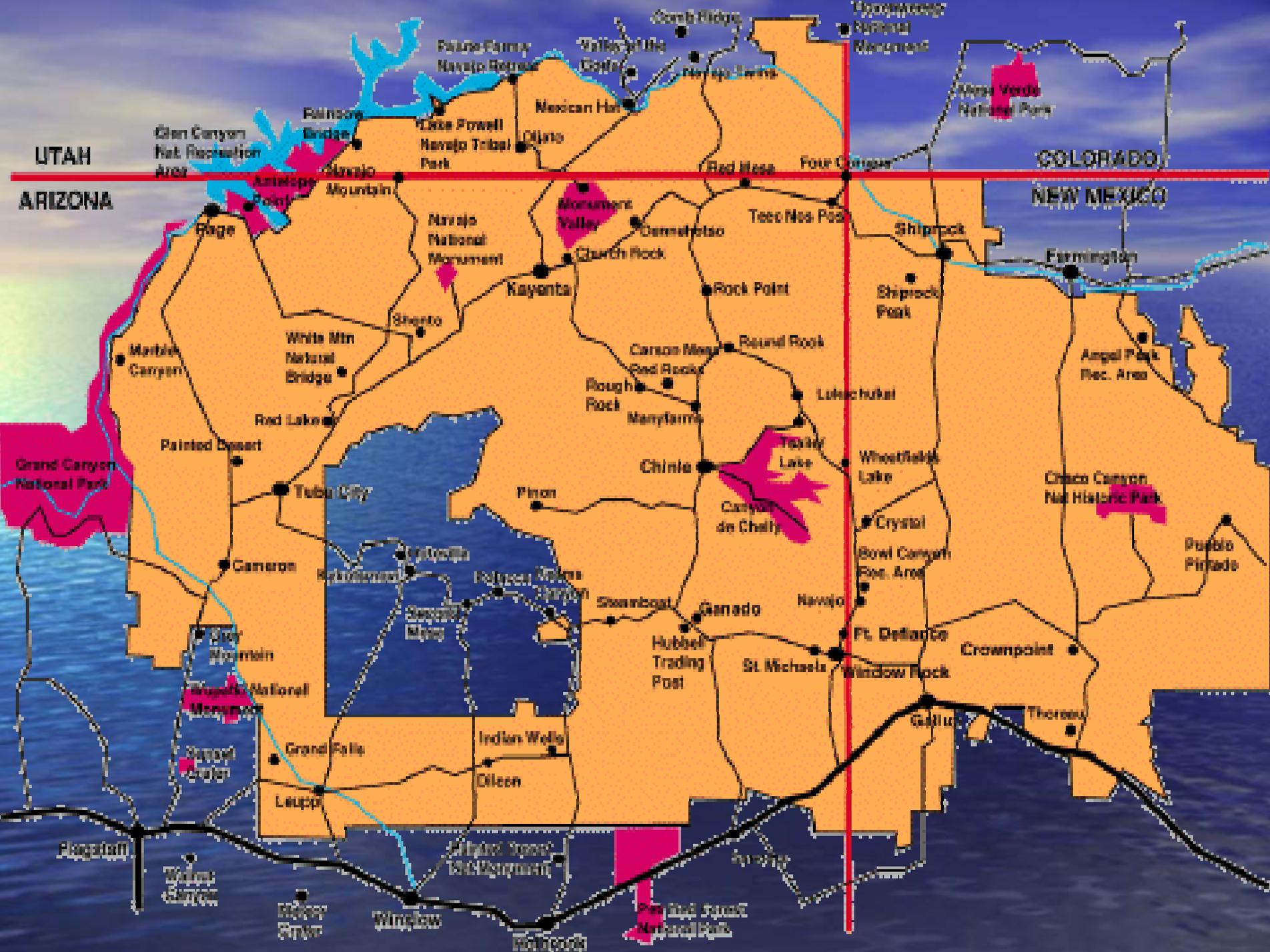
Who are the Navajo?



- The Dine, or “The People,” as the Navajo call themselves, are the largest Native American tribe in America.
- About 210,000 Navajo
- The Navajo reservation is the size of West Virginia

Navajo Reservation





UTAH

COLORADO

ARIZONA

NEW MEXICO

Grand Canyon National Park

Grand Canyon Nat. Recreation Area

Marble Canyon

Navajo National Monument

Flagstaff

Tuba City

Winslow

Painted Desert

Red Lake

White Mtn. Natural Bridge

Shonto

Chinle

Hubbell Trading Post

St. Michaels

Window Rock

Thoreau

Gallup

Navajo Mountain

Navajo National Monument

Shiprock

Rock Point

Teec Nos Pos

Shiprock Peak

Four Corners

Red Mesa

Navajo

Navajo

Navajo Tribal Park

Monument Valley

Church Rock

Carson Mesa

Rough Rock

Many Farms

Leitchfield

Wheatfield Lake

Crystal

Bowl Canyon Rec. Area

Palisades

Navajo

Shiprock

Shiprock Peak

Shiprock

Shiprock

Shiprock

Shiprock

Shiprock

Shiprock

Navajo



- The Seal was designed by John Claw, Jr. of Many Farms. It was adopted by the Tribe in 1952 and updated in 1988. Fifty arrow heads point outward, representing the fifty states protecting the Navajo people from the outside world. Inside the arrow points are three colored lines that are open at the top. These red, yellow, and blue lines represent a protective rainbow. The Sun rises from the East at the top of the seal, illuminating Navajo Land bounded by the four sacred mountains, each in its appropriate color. Cows, sheep and goats, graze on the land. Two green corn stalks, symbolic of as the sustainer of Navajo life grow from the bottom of the seal. They have tips of yellow pollen that are used in many ceremonies.

History of the Native Americans:



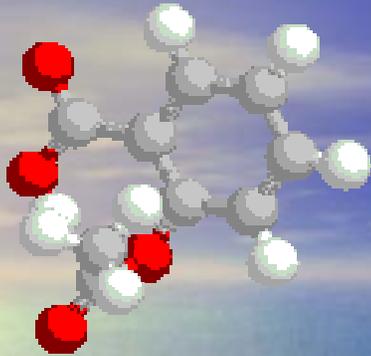
- Christopher Columbus was the first European to physically contact with the Native Americans.
- They traded common goods and the settlers discovered gold, jewels and land.





- In the 1700s, small pox broke out among the Native Americans.
- Killing over a 2/3 of Indians.
- Small pox can be treated but there is no cure.
- Other diseases began to spread like measles, chicken pox, tuberculosis, etc.

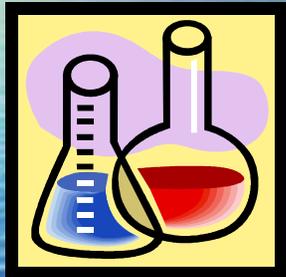




Modern Medicine



- Together, Alexander Fleming, Ernst Chain and Howard Florey discovered penicillin and its curative effect on infectious diseases.
- Robert Koch proved that dreaded disease, tuberculosis, was caused by specific bacteria.
- Discovery of the human blood groups made by Nobel Laureate Karl Landsteiner in 1901.
- Edmond H. Fischer and Edwin G. Krebs discovered reversible protein phosphorylation as a biological regulatory mechanism.





Modern Medicine (CONT.)

- In 1930, Dr. Edward Bach, an early pioneer of natural medicine obtained results when he treated the person rather than the disease. He used flower essences to help with fear, loneliness, uncertainty, and despair.
- There are many more scientists who discovered ways to treat disease, viruses, pains, etc.
- Scientists discovered ways to prevent and treat symptoms much easier than in the past. They used certain herbs from all over the world and combined them with other plants.



Modern Nursing



- Florence Nightingale was born on May 12, 1820 in Italy to a wealthy family.
- Her education included the mastery of languages, literature, philosophy, history, science, mathematics, religion, art, and music.
- She believed she was, "called by God to help others to improve the wellbeing of mankind."
- Because of her vision, nurses were no longer untrained housekeepers but people trained in the care of the sick.
- She believed the goal of nursing was to return the patient to his/her best possible condition.
- In 1883, The Nightingale Pledge was written and administered to the graduating class of Farrand (Nurse) Training School in Detroit, Michigan.



Modern Nursing (Cont.)

The Florence Nightingale Pledge

I solemnly pledge myself before God and presence of this assembly;

To pass my life in purity and to practice my profession faithfully.

I will abstain from whatever is deleterious and mischievous and will not take or knowingly administer any harmful drug.

I will do all in my power to maintain and elevate the standard of my profession

and will hold in confidence all personal matters committed to my keeping

and family affairs coming to my knowledge in the practice of my calling.

With loyalty will I endeavor to aid the physician in his work, and devote myself to the welfare of those committed to my care.

Modern Nursing (Cont.)



- Lavinia Lloyd Dock is also remembered for her outstanding contributions to nursing literature.
- She graduated from Bellevue Training School for Nurses in 1886.
- Dock became aware of the problems students faced in studying drugs and solutions.
- She wrote *Materia Medica for Nurses*, one of the first nursing textbooks.
- In addition to serving as foreign editor of the *American Journal of Nursing*, she wrote *Hygiene and Morality*.

Modern Nursing (Cont.)



- Isabel Adams Hampton Robb was the American Nurses Association's first president
- In 1896, Robb organized the group known as the Nurses' Associated Alumnae of the United States and Canada.
- In 1893, Robb gathered together a nucleus of women who were superintendents of schools and founded the American Society of Superintendents of Training Schools for Nurses.
- This organization became the National League of Nursing Education in 1912.
- Robb was responsible for initiating many improvements in nursing education.

Navajo History





The Navajo honor the land that lies between the Four Sacred Mountains. "The Holy People placed here for us all things we need to live and be happy. He gave us Father Sun who gives light and energy to Mother Earth. Mother Earth nurtures us and gives us all things including the mountains, trees, our animals, grass, food, and the herbs to heal us of our infirmities.. All things are alive to us. The Holy Ones taught us how to take care of Mother Earth. We honor them in our delight to take care of her. Many peoples of Mother Earth are now hurting her. A future day will come when the peoples of the Earth will come to us, the Navajo, to teach them how to care for Mother Earth. When that day comes, we will be ready." [Al Durtschi](#)



Navajo History (Cont.)



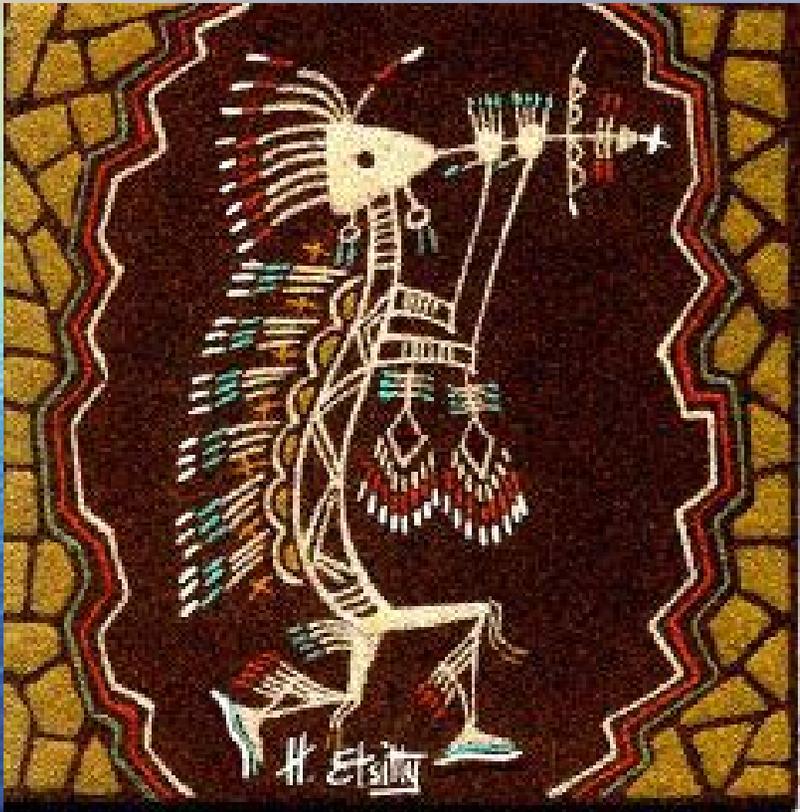
- Changing Woman is the primary figure of the Navajo females.
- She was the first to be created by the Holy People.
- As she reached puberty, she was magically impregnated by the rays of the Sun and water from the waterfall, and bore two sons- The Twins.

The Navajo History (Cont.)



- The Hero Twins journeyed to the house of their father, the Sun, encountering many adventures and slaying most of the monsters.
- In the story of the War Ceremony, First Man created the prayer stick that told him of the whereabouts of The Twins. He gave them the power when they needed help.
- When one of the twins got injured, a healing plant appeared just in front of the brother. The injured twin chewed it and rubbed himself then a cloud arose and rain cooled him.

Navajo History (Cont.)



- The Holy People developed ways of doing things.
- They taught the Navajo how to build homes, obtain food, marry, travel, and protect themselves.
- After the Holy People departed, the various clans of the Navajo wandered in the east and west.
- Now they are in the Four Corners region, The Navajo Reservation.

Navajo History (Cont.)

These are the Navajo lands:



Navajo Medicine



- The Navajo value the legends of their ancestors and treasure Mother Nature.
- Natural Medicine herbs and traditional ceremonies are the only remedies to help cure of illness.
- About 30% of Navajo still practice traditional ceremonies and use herbs to cure sickness.
- The majority of these are mainly elderly who believe there are powers and answers to prayers.
- Plants are very important to a sacred chant through prayers, songs and sand paintings.



Navajo Medicine (Cont.)

- The Navajo Medicine Man knows his herbs, where to get them, and how to prepare them.
- When he is collecting his seeds, leaves, or roots for the preparation of powders or infusions, he is careful that the plants and earth out of which all these things come are not offended.
- After locating a desired plant, he sprinkles ceremonial corn pollen over it.
- He talks, sings, and gives presents to it. His gifts are turquoise, shell, or some mineral.

Navajo Medicine (Cont.)

Navajo Herbs are found in different places, depending on the season. The most common herbs used in rituals are:

- ✦ **Artemisia**- For skin wounds, boils, and burns.
- ✦ **Juniper**- The inner bark, when rubbed into the scalp, cures dandruff, and falling hair in both men and women.
- ✦ **Lichens**- Chewed for diseases of the mouth, sore gums, canker, and caries.
- ✦ **Pine pitch**- Placed in wounds as a disinfectant.
- ✦ **Sage**- The white variety boiled with a pinch of salt is a very good remedy for hemoptysis.
- ✦ **Spurge**- Made into a pimple medicine for acne.
- ✦ **Yucca**- Emulsion, prepared by pounding, is a cure for dandruff; also makes hair long, soft, and lustrous.

Navajo Medicine (Cont.)



- Corn Pollen is one of the most sacred element used in Navajo ceremonies.
- It is used for prayers, songs, and blessings.
- There are many more herbs used by the medicine men but corn pollen is the sacred remedy for healings.





RABBIT BRUSH
K'ililboiboh

Used for coughs, colds, fever, rheumatism, internal injuries, menstrual pain, and to promote sweating.



GLOVE MALLOW
'Azee'nili'ni'

Used as a tonic to improve the appetite, increase strength & flu.



GAMBEL OAK BARK
Chech'il Bikhashd'ooth

Used in the medicine to lessen afterbirth pains and as a cathartic.



SAGE BRUSH
Ts'ah

Used for sweat bath & for poison Ivy.



MEDICINE BAG
'Azee'blazis

Traditionally used to store various herbs, and corn pollen.



RED GIILIA

Insures a healthy pregnancy and an easy delivery.

Navajo Medicine (Cont.)



Loco Weed is one of the life medicines. It is a diuretic and used for venereal disease and stomach disorders. The crushed leaves are used to soothe a bad back.

Navajo Medicine (Cont.)



Milkweed is one of the Navajo life medicines that is used for stomach problems, skin diseases, and nasal congestion. The medicine is prepared by crushing the leaves and mixing them with water. The liquid is taken internally. Crushed and moistened leaves are used as a poultice to treat pimples. Leaves are used as snuff to relieve nasal congestion. The milky looking sap helps nursing mothers produce milk. Poison milkweed is considered poisonous to all livestock. Navajos say people can eat the plant raw or boiled.

Navajo Medicine (Cont.)



Sandpuff is a medicine made from the plant to treat internal injuries, such as those caused by a fall. Wooton sandpuff can be used for gallbladder problems; it is made into tea. It was said to be a good luck plant and is carried for protection.

Navajo Medicine (Cont.)



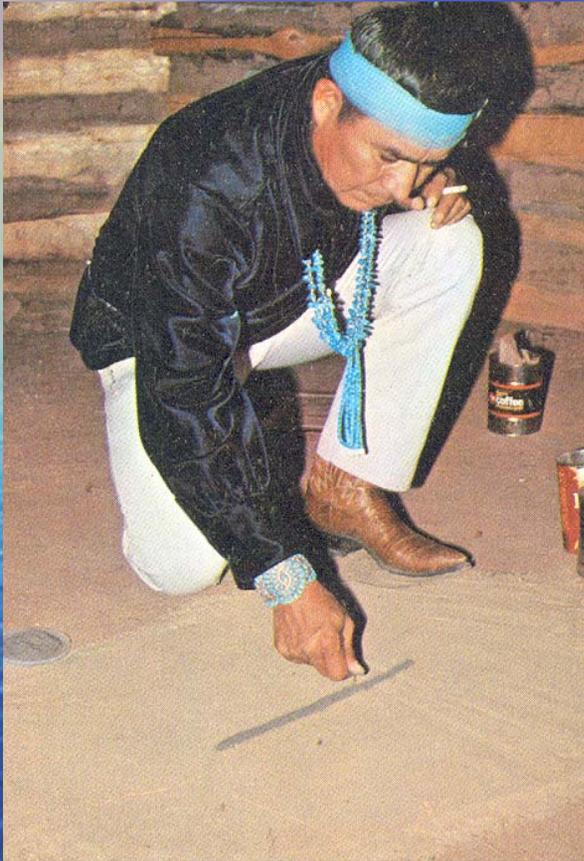
Snakeweed is used to heal cuts and bites in humans and animals. The plant is chewed and the pulp placed on the bite of an ant, bee, or wasp. It is used to heal castration incisions in livestock. To treat snakebite in sheep, the plant is boiled, then placed on the bite. The swelling is said to go down immediately. Snakeweed medicine is given in childbirth. The ashes of this and other plants are rubbed on the forehead to cure a headache, nervousness, or fever.

Navajo Medicine (Cont.)



Yarrow must be picked just before use, gathered, dried, and saved until needed, or are taken on trips for emergencies. The plants are ground before use, mixed with water, and drunk or rubbed on the skin. Yarrow is used alone for fever and headaches. To relieve headaches caused by sore eyes, this plant is added to the fire and the smoke directed at the eyes. Yarrow is used for healing saddle sores on horses.

Navajo Ceremonies



- There are different types of ceremonies performed by medicine men.
- Each ceremony fulfills specific needs and accomplishes specific purposes.
- Here are several examples of ceremonies:

Navajo Ceremony (Cont.)



- The First Smile Ceremony, a short, private, ritual that occurs after a child is born.
- It reveals a lighter, more humorous sensibility.
- The maternal grandmother usually does the honors, but another female relative attending the birth can carry it out.
- The Navajo also honors the first laugh.

Navajo Ceremony (Cont.)



- Kinaalda, is a ceremony performed on young Navajo girls who enter womanhood when they get their first menstrual cycle.
- Changing Woman, one of the Holy People instrumental in creating the Navajo, had the first Kinaalda.
- The Kinaalda began so that women would be fruitful, enabling humans to multiply.
- Traditionally, Navajo Kinaalda lasts for four days.
- It entails months of preparation, hard work, and expense on the part of the girl's family.

Kinaalda: A Navajo Rite of Passage

URL: [Http://www.nativetelecom.org/realmedia/video/kinaalda](http://www.nativetelecom.org/realmedia/video/kinaalda)

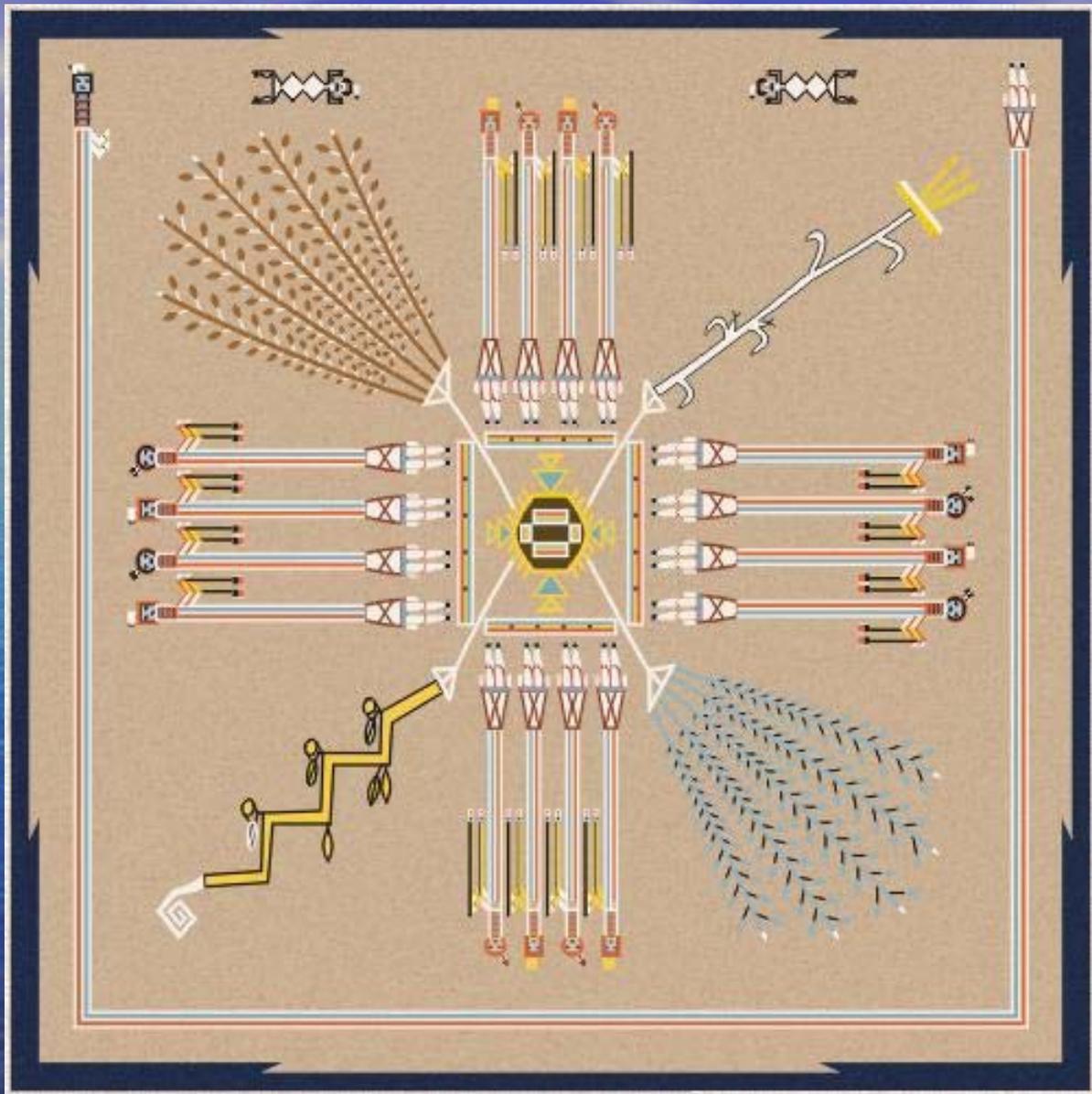
Navajo Ceremony (Cont.)

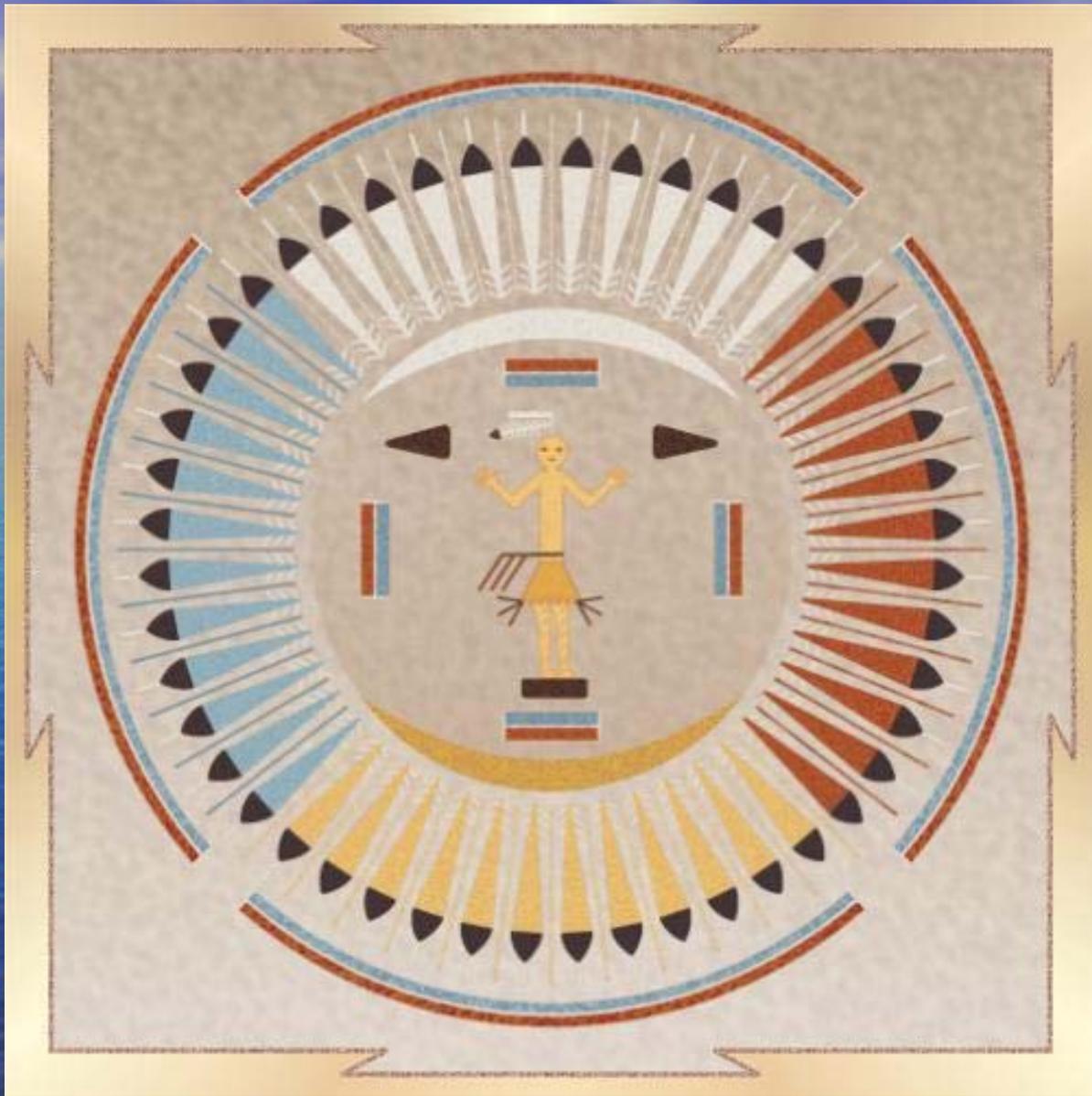


- There are also certain types of ceremonies that use sand paintings. The medicine man concentrates on knowing and remembering the paintings within his own areas of expertise.
- He remembers how long the healing will take and which sand painting to perform.
- Sand Painters use delicate handmade lines of color to trace the shapes of sacred feathers, clouds, medicine bundles, yeis (god creation figures), plants, and standing rainbows exactly as they are directed by the Navajo Singer, or Hataali.



Medicine Man creating painting for camera





Navajo Ceremony (Cont.)



- The wedding ceremony uses a Navajo Wedding Basket.
- The Wedding Basket is a special, sacred item among basket-weaving tribes, especially the Navajos.
- There are traditional designs such as the classic circle patterned with stars and points.
- The triangles are mountains and standing thunderclouds, interspersed with the deep valleys.
- A slender opening in the circle signifies the east, the place of beginnings, sunrise, and power. This opening invites the power of the east to come into the lives of the newly married couple.
- First corn pollen is sprinkled around the basket, blessing it, encircling and marking the cardinal points with prayers. Then special corn batter is placed in the center. The couple feed each other, eating from the unique corn preparation in a ritual signifying life, fertility, physical nourishment, strength, and spiritual rebirth.



Wedding Ceremony with Navajo Basket



Wedding Ceremony with Navajo Basket

Navajo compared to Western Traditions



- According to current statistics, nearly half of the U.S. population suffer from some form of chronic illness, such as diabetes, arthritis, heart disease, or alcoholism.
- Among many American Indian tribes, rates are even higher.
- Many native people choose to go through healing rites, either alone or in addition to conventional medical treatment.



Navajo compared to Western Traditions(Cont.)



- Modern Medicine and research look for cause/ effect relation in disease management.
- Computer technology is taking over the medical field for faster and more accurate results: CAT scan, x-ray, MRI and Telehome Healthcare are but a few.

Navajo compared to Western Traditions(Cont.)

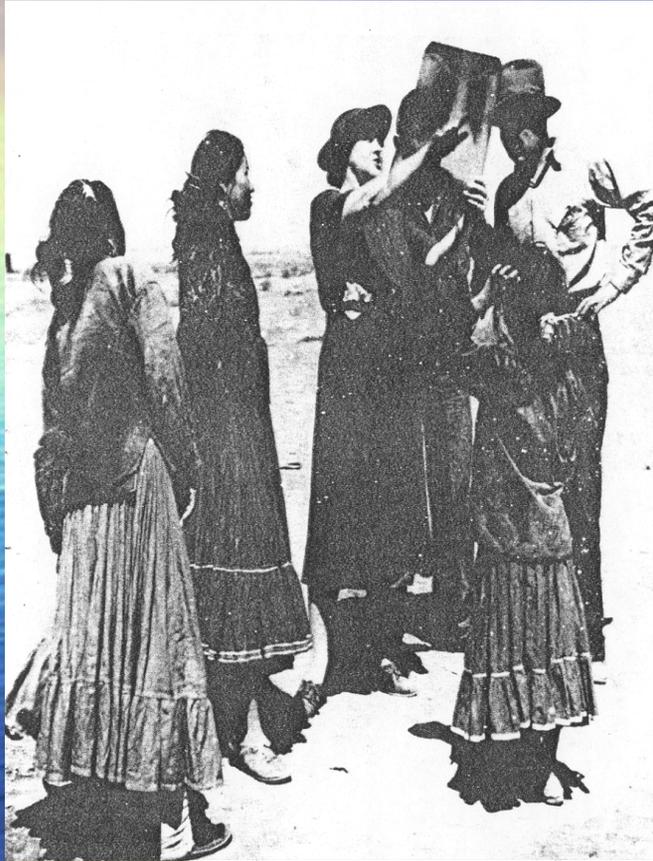


- Physicians working among the Navajo people during the nineteenth century were astonished to discover that their patients saw little advantage to western style medicine.
- The Navajo understood some of the value of western medicine as vaccination, surgery, hygiene.
- Some Medicine men discourage their people from seeking outside medical assistance.
- When a measles epidemic swept across the reservation, it killed a number of people and created fear which caused the Navajo to seek help in hospitals.



Nurse with three recovering typhoid patients

Navajo compared to Western Traditions (Cont.)



- The first Navajo Medical Center Dedication was on June 20, 1938. The Indian Service opened its new hospital at Fort Defiance.
- A field nurse displays an x-ray image in an effort to explain the need for getting a patient to the hospital. (See Illustration) In addition to providing direct medical care, field nurses sought to educate the Navajo on the merits of western medicine.
- The Indian Service trains and employs Navajo women as nurses aides on the reservation.
- Many Navajo will continue to practice their traditional herbal and ceremonial practices while other seek health care in hospitals.